

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A light truck or passenger vehicle pneumatic tire comprising a tread, the tread having a central tread width that is divided into a central tread zone and opposing lateral tread zones, the tire further comprising shoulder regions extending from each lateral tread zone, the tread comprising a plurality of tread elements separated by lateral grooves in the lateral tread zones, the tread elements having block walls defined by the lateral grooves, and elongated pads in the lateral grooves, the pads being in the lateral tread zones, ~~extending from between a pair of~~ the tread elements and into a shoulder region, wherein ~~the tire is further characterized by~~  

each pad having a pair of deflecting walls, each deflecting wall initiating at a base of a tread element block wall, each pad having a radial height less than an adjacent tread element and a base width  $W_p$  greater than or at least 50% of the width  $W_g$  of the lateral grooves, the width  $W_g$  of the lateral grooves being measured at a surface of the tread.
2. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the tread has an elongated pad in every lateral groove in the lateral tread zones.
3. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein circumferentially adjacent pads have different radial lengths.
4. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a tapering cross-sectional configuration along the smallest dimension.
5. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 4 wherein the cross-sectional configuration is triangular or trapezoidal.
6. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a constant width.
7. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a non-constant width.

8. (currently amended) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a ~~maximum~~ radial height of ~~at not more than~~ 30% of the non-skid tread depth.
9. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads have a base width of 50 - 90 % of the lateral groove width.
10. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads extend through the entire shoulder region of the tire.
11. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pads are located between every other tread element in the lateral tread zones.
12. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pad has a radially outer surface and the radially outer surface is parallel to the tread surface.
13. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the axially inner and axially outer ends of the pad have tapering configurations.
14. (original) The pneumatic tire of claim 1 wherein the pad has a pair of opposing sides, the sides each being adjacent a tread element, wherein the sides are inclined relative to the radial direction of the tire.

The above amendments are supported by the original specification.